

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 VIENTI 02522 01 OF 02 120309Z

61/12

ACTION EA-06

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 EUR-08 PM-03 INR-05 CIAE-00 NSC-05

NSCE-00 DODE-00 SSO-00 SP-02 /044 W

----- 106883

R 110437Z APR 75

FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3313

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY PARIS

USLO PEKING

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

CINCPAC

USSAG

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 VIENTIANE 2522

LIMDIS

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y-CORRECTED TEXT PARA 2-O

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, VN, VS, CB, LA

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S ASSESSMENT OF POLITICAL MOOD IN LAOS
IN LIGHT OF EVENTS IN INDOCHINA

SUMMARY. MY DEPARTURE HAS PROVIDED THE OPPORTUNITY FOR
AN INTENSIVE SERIES OF CONTACTS WITH PROMINENT LAO AND
WITH MY DIPLOMATIC COLLEAGUES OF ALL POLITICAL PERSUASIONS.
AMONG THE NON-COMMUNISTS, THERE IS OBVIOUSLY PROFOUND
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 VIENTI 02522 01 OF 02 120309Z

CONCERN OVER THE SITUATION IN VIETNAM AND CAMBODIA

AND THE EFFECT IT WILL HAVE IN LAOS, BUT EVEN TAKING ORIENTAL POLITENESS INTO CONSIDERATION, I SENSE LESS REPROACH OF OUR COUNTRY THAN I HAD EXPECTED. I HAVE BEEN GIVEN A STRONG SENSE OF A CONTINUING DESIRE FOR AN IMPORTANT ROLE FOR AMERICA IN THIS PART OF THE WORLD BY BOTH THE COMMUNISTS AND NON-COMMUNISTS. THIS HAS BEEN IN PART MANIFESTED BY A TACTFUL SILENCE ON THE PART OF THE NORTH VIETNAMESE AND PATHET LAO WITH REGARD TO RECENT EVENTS, BUT MORE SPECIFICALLY BY THE GESTURES MADE BY BOTH LAO SIDES IN CONNECTION WITH MY DEPARTURE AND BY THE EMPHASIS PLACED BY THE LAO OF BOTH SIDES AND BY COMMUNIST AND NON-COMMUNIST DIPLOMATS ON THE DESIRABILITY OF MY REPLACEMENT ARRIVING PROMPTLY. THE NON-COMMUNISTS OF THE VIENTIANE SIDE ARE SHOCKED BY THE TURN OF EVENTS BUT THEY ARE FAR FROM LAYING THE BLAME ENTIRELY ON OUR DOORSTEP.

1. VIETNAM. WHILE THEY MUST BE PRIVATELY GLOATING OVER THE TRAGEDY OF VIETNAM, THE PATHET LAO HAVE AVOIDED THE SUBJECT WITH ME AND HAVE BEEN STRESSING THEIR HIGH REGARD FOR THE UNITED STATES WITH FULSOME EXPRESSIONS OF HOPE THAT MY REPLACEMENT WILL BE NAMED PROMPTLY AND THAT THE CURRENT TREND OF OUR RELATIONS WILL BE PURSUED. THE RUSSIAN, THE POLE, THE HUNGARIAN AND THE EAST GERMAN HAVE DISCUSSED VIETNAM DISPASSIONATELY STRESSING THEIR HOPES FOR A "LAO SOLUTION." THE NORTH VIETNAMESE, ON WHOM I CALLED IN HIS CAPACITY AS DEAN, CHATTED WITH ME ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF LAOS ACHIEVING ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE THROUGH DEVELOPMENT OF ITS MINERAL RESOURCES AND THE NEED FOR SENSIBLE PLANNING OF A RAILROAD TO NORTH VIETNAM AND OF PORT FACILITIES THERE TO HANDLE ORE TONNAGE. HE STAYED AWAY, AS DID I, FROM CURRENT EVENTS. I HAVE NO FEEL FOR THE CHINESE VIEW AS THE AMBASSADOR IS ABOUT AS FRIENDLY AS AN ANACONDA.

2. THE NON-COMMUNISTS ARE HEARTSICK TO SEE THEIR VIETNAMESE FRIENDS IN TROUBLE AND ARE FEARFUL OF THE "ARROGANCE" WHICH NORTH VIETNAMESE SUCCESSES WILL ENGENDER IN THE PATHET LAO. THEY MAKE KIND REMARKS

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 VIENTI 02522 01 OF 02 120309Z

ABOUT MY TENURE AND URGE THE PROMPT ARRIVAL OF MY SUCCESSOR. WHILE THERE IS AN ELEMENT OF ORIENTAL POLITENESS IN THEIR REMARKS THESE ARE FELLOWS WITH WHOM I AM ON TERMS OF VERY CONSIDERABLE CANDOR AND I AM STRUCK BY THEIR LACK OF REPROACHFULNESS TOWARD US. THIS IS A SMALL SOCIETY, PROFOUNDLY KNOWLEDGEABLE OF THE PERSONALITIES OF THE VIETNAMESE AND CAMBODIAN LEADERSHIP AND WITH A MORE THAN SUPERFICIAL

UNDERSTANDING OF THE INDO-CHINA WAR AND OF THE AMERICAN ROLE IN THIS PART OF THE WORLD. THE VIENTIANE SIDE IS HORRIFIED AND ASTOUNDED BY THE ROUTS IN MR I AND MR II AND WHILE THEY UNDERSTAND THE AMERICAN MILITARY ASSISTANCE PROBLEM AND DEEPLY RESENT BLATANT NVN VIOLATIONS OF THE AGREEMENT, THEY ARE BLAMING THIEU AND ARVN FOR FALLING INTO THE PRESENT MESS. THEY, AND PARTICULARLY THE PRIME MINISTER, WILL TRIM THEIR SAILS TO TAKE PRESENT REALITIES INTO ACCOUNT, BUT THEY EXPECT AMERICA TO CONTINUE TO PLAY AN IMPORTANT AND RESPONSIBLE ROLE IN THIS PART OF THE WORLD.

3. CAMBODIA. THE LAO NON-COMMUNISTS ARE WATCHING WITH DEEP CONCERN THE CURRENT DRAMA IN PHNOM PENH. THEY AGONIZE OVER THE FAILURE OF LON NOL AND THEIR OTHER FRIENDS TO DO BETTER BUT THEY ARE BLAMING THE KHMER MORE THAN THEY ARE BLAMING US FOR WHAT IS TAKING PLACE. FINANCE MINISTER NGON SANANIKONE, WHO IS A PILLAR OF ANTI-COMMUNISM AND HAS KNOWN LON NOL (AND BIG MINH) SINCE THEY WERE ALL INDO-CHINA SOCCER FOOTBALL STARS FORTY YEARS AGO, CONFIDED YESTERDAY THAT THE CORRUPTION AND INCOMPETENCE OF LON NOL AND HIS PEOPLE HAD BROUGHT ABOUT THE PRESENT DISASTER. THE AMERICANS HAD SUPPLIED THEM AMPLY, HE SAID, BUT THE MISMANAGEMENT BY THE KHMER HAD BEEN APPALLING. THE SALE OF MILITARY SUPPLIES TO THE OTHER SDE HAD REALLY BEEN BEYOND THE PALE BUT LON NOL AND HIS TEAM HAD FAILED IN TOO MANY WAYS TO ACT RESPONSIBLY. THERE WAS LITTLE THE AMERICANS COULD DO THAT THEY HAD NOT DONE. I GET THIS REACTION TO VARYING DEGREES FROM ALL SIDES.

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 VIENTI 02522 02 OF 02 110608Z

12

ACTION EA-06

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 EUR-08 PM-03 INR-05 CIAE-00 NSC-05

NSCE-00 DODE-00 SSO-00 SP-02 /044 W

----- 087940

R 110437Z APR 75

FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3314

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
AMCONSUL HONG KONG
AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MANILA
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY PARIS
USLO PEKING
AMEMBASSY SAIGON
AMEMBASSY TOKYO
CINCPAC
USSAG

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 VIENTIANE 2522

LIMDIS

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

5. THE FUTURE. THE VIENTIANE SIDE MILITARY ARE
BY FAR THE MOST DEEPLY CONCERNED ABOUT THE FUTURE
WHICH THEY VIEW WITH DEEP APPREHENSION. AMONG SENIOR
CIVILIAN OFFICIALS THIS APOCALYPTIC VIEW IS TEMPERED
BY THE CONVICTION THAT ANY NEW REGIMES IN CAMBODIA
AND VIETNAM WILL BE IMBUED WITH THE XENOPHOBIA
WHICH HAS TRADITIONALLY CHARACTERIZED RELATIONS
BETWEEN THE LAO, KHMER AND VIETNAMESE. (FOR EXAMPLE,
DURING MY FAREWELL CALL ON HIM, SOUVANNA HELD FORTH
TO CHAPMAN AND TO ME ON THE SUBJECT OF THE NORTH
VIETNAMESE CHARACTER. INDIVIDUALLY THEY ARE NICE
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 VIENTI 02522 02 OF 02 110608Z

FELLOWS, HE SAID, BUT ONCE TWO OR THREE GET TOGETHER
THEY ARE IMPOSSIBLY STUBBORD AND ARROGANT. HE RE-
CALLED WITH DELIGHT THE NUMBER HE HAD PUNCHED IN THE
HEAD "CASSER LA FIGURE" WHEN HE WAS STUDYING IN HANOI.
THIS IS OBVIOUSLY A DETAIL BUT IT DEMONSTRATES A
STATE OF MIND.)

THE LAO CONSIDER THE CAMBODIAN INCOUNTRY LEADER-
SHIP UNLIKELY TO KOW-TOW TO PRINCE SIHANOUK AND
EXPECT IT TO MAINTAIN A HIGH DEGREE OF INDEPENDENCE
FROM HANOI. SIMILARLY, THEY ASSUME THAT THE PATHET
LAO WILL BE INCREASINGLY RESTIVE UNDER NORTH VIET-
NAMESE TUTELAGE AND THEY COMFORT THEMSELVES WITH THE
IDEA THAT THE TONKINESE WILL FIND IT HARD TO DO-
MINATE ANNAM AND COCHIN CHINA. GIVEN THE SEVERITY
WITH WHICH THE NORTH VIETNAMESE CAN BE EXPECTED TO
IMPOSE THEIR SWAY SOME OF THIS IS VERY NAIVE, BUT IT

DEMONSTRATES A TYPICALLY LAO ABILITY TO ASSUME THAT
SOMEHOW THINGS ARE GOING TO WORK OUT FOR THE BEST.

5. THE U.S. ROLE. IN A LITTLE CAPITAL LIKE VIENTIANE,
WHICH HAS BEEN SUBJECTED TO MUCH PRESSURE OVER THE
YEARS, EVERY LOCAL GROUP AND EVERY FOREIGN EMBASSY
HAS ITS OX TO GORE. NATIONAL AND FACTIONAL INTERESTS
ARE PURSUED IN THIS COCKPIT AND INDIVIDUAL PERSONALITY
TRAITS WEIGH HEAVILY. NEVERTHELESS, THE IMPRESSION
I GET IS A CONSENSUS THAT WHILE WE MAY HAVE MADE MIS-
TAKES AND WHILE OUR FRIENDS MAY HAVE ERRED CONSPICUOUSLY,
WE ARE FAR FROM BEING A "PITIFUL, HELPLESS GIANT."
COMMUNISTS AND NON-COMMUNISTS ALIKE EXPECT US TO PLAY
A VIGOROUS, RESPONSIBLE ROLE IN SOUTHEAST ASIA IN THE
FUTURE IN A MANNER AND WITH A STYLE THAT WILL BE DIF-
FERENT THAN IN THE PAST BUT WHICH WILL BE COMMENSURATE
WITH OUR RESPONSIBILITIES AS A GREAT POWER AND WITH
OUR NATIONAL HERITAGE. BOTH ARE SURPRISINGLY WELL
PERCEIVED BY POLITICAL FIGURES OF EVERY NATIONALITY
AND STRIPE. THE MOTIVATIONS OF THESE DIVERSE GROUPS
GO WELL BEYOND THE SCOPE OF THIS MESSAGE BUT OVER
AND ABOVE AN UNDERSTANDABLE DESIRE BY THE LAO FOR
FUTURE MATERIAL ASSISTANCE, EACH LAO SIDE AND EVERY
FOREIGN EMBASSY EITHER DIRECTLY OR OBLIQUELY IMPLIES
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 VIENTI 02522 02 OF 02 110608Z

THAT A SIGNIFICANT U.S. INVOLVEMENT IN INDO-CHINA
IS NATURAL, DESIRABLE AND APPROPRIATE.
WHITEHOUSE

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic DecapTIONing: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PERSONAL OPINION, REPORTS, AMBASSADORS, POLITICAL SITUATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 11 APR 1975
DecapTION Date: 28 MAY 2004
DecapTION Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: buchandr
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975VIENTI02522
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750127-0943
From: VIENTIANE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750456/aaaabzwa.tel
Line Count: 256
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: buchandr
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 14 MAY 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <14 MAY 2003 by izenbei0>; APPROVED <01 OCT 2003 by buchandr>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: AMBASSADOR'S ASSESSMENT OF POLITICAL MOOD IN LAOS IN LIGHT OF EVENTS IN INDOCHINA
TAGS: PFOR, VN, VS, CB, LA
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006